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Islamic and Chinese Peripheral Studies in Imperial Japan--- A Problem of Japan's Sinology and the Legacy of Romanticized Silk Road Discourses

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The word Silk Road 'Seidenstraße' was made by Richthofen, a German geographer. He made a journey to Northwest China and published a book entitled *China* in the end of the 19th century. The research was done during the era of unequal treaty system and this word appeared in consequence. This book was translated into Japanese and published in 1942- 1944 from Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店, Tokyo. As we suspect from the year of the publication of the translation, the keyword Silk Road became a boom during the Sino-Japanese War. In order to make the war situation better, a travel record about 70 years ago was reviewed in 1940s.

In this paper, I will analyze the relationship between the development of China's peripheral studies and Islamic area studies in Japan prior to the defeat of the Sino-Japanese War in 1945. Furthermore, I will introduce several pictures taken by photographers hired by Kahoku Kotsu 華北交通 (North China Railway Co.), a semi national-policy company in North China.

1. Japan's Sinology in progress after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident

1) Pre-history of Sinology : Case of Academic Researchers

During the long tradition on Chinese studies in Japan during the Edo Period 江戸時代, Japanese literati respected and praised Chinese cultures, thought and writings, including four classics and five classics on Confucians. However, Japan's sinology was modified and re-established after the victory over Russia in 1905. In 1906, Japan began to run Southern Manchuria Railway Co. (Mantsu 満鉄) in Northeast China and then came a boom to study Asian history. In Kyoto Imperial University, they established a course of Asian history in 1906. Naito Konan 内藤湖南 and Kuwabara Jitsuzo 桑原隲蔵 were the representatives of scholars. On the other hand they established a course on Asian history at Faculty of Literature, Tokyo Imperial University 東京帝国大学 in 1910, featuring Shiratori Kurakichi 白鳥庫吉 as the professor.

In order to respond the needs of time, they began to establish Manchuria-Mongolian

studies, Manchuria-Korean studies and East Asian (area) studies. They focused on the historical and perpetual rise and fall of the hegemony of nomad tribes and the changes of various dynasties of China, denying the Edo period's beautified and decorated image of China as the land of morality. Quite contrary. China began to be regarded to be obsolete and backward compared to "progressive" Meiji Japan, which strived to catch up Western "civilized" countries in every aspect of the society, including the nation-building and the creation of national thought.

The more they studied Sinology, the more they were able to strengthen and affirm the discourse of the supremacy of Japanese Emperors over China's traditional and changing Emperors and dynasties because Japanese Emperor system had allegedly had two-thousand-and-sixty-hundred-year continuity and kept integrity of Japan without interval. This discourse also legitimized Japan's rule over Northeast China.

On the other hand, they accumulated the studies of the history and characters of nomad tribes around China proper, stressing the disintegrated and intermissive character of China and pointing out the fundamental weakness of China's integrity. Sinology in this period tried to prove Japan's historical, cultural, and sometimes racial roots based on Chinese classic writings. These works were important to prove Japan was an independent and strong modern country, which had unique characters such as the emperor, a different and independent language, manners, morality and the Japanese 'race'. In other words, Sinology was done in order to scrutinize the strong self-image of the confident Japanese nation, which was in process of modernization in every aspects but also annoyed by anxiety to confront the rapid social changes. In particular, this proud self-image of "progressed" a "unique" Japanese people gave a way to the boom of Silk Road during the Sino-Japanese era (1937-1945).

Newly fostered academic sinologists had no foundation but had more confident in understanding China's history than Chinese sinologists and western sinologists. Such arrogant and self-sufficient scholars believed to have better background than Chinese and westerners in understanding Chinese issues because of the full literacy in classic Chinese and the knowledge on Confucian thought, which were taught in private schools prior to the Meiji era.

After the making of Manchukuo in 1932, in order to justify the Japan's military occupation on the continent, they developed the studies on the history of nomad tribes such as Manchus, Mongolians and Turks and they extended studies on the history of East-West relations. For example, Fujita Toyohachi 藤田豊八 wrote *A history of East-*

West Relations in 1933, Iwamura Shinobu 岩村忍 wrote *Tozai Koshoshi Josetsu* (an Introductory Study on East- West Relationship) in 1939. Henry Yule and Henry Coldier's *Cathay and the Way Thither* (1866) was also translated into Japanese and published in 1944. Asahi Shimbun also published a book *Seihoku Shina* 西北支那 (Northwest China) and referred to the word Silk Road named by Richthofen (Asahi Shimbun 1945: 19).

2) Birth of right-wing Asianists

There were two trends among political groups in Meiji era. One is Kokken-ha 国権派 or the Sovereign Right Sect and Minken-ha 民権派 or the Civil Right Sect. After the first Sino-Japanese War in 1894-1895, the Sovereign Right Sect was merged into right-wing Asianists アジア主義者, who believed in Japan's preferential hegemony over Asia, which "needed assistance" from Japan. They imagined that Japan had enough power to achieve modernization and nation-building in a short period and also imagined that Japan could be the leader of "backward" Asia because of its "special" character of having the emperor with unbroken imperial line. These Asianists tried to export the methodology and model of modernization in a Japanese style, which excluded democracy and respects to human dignity. Gender equality and national equality were not of their interest. Asianists consisted of 100 % male activists from the middle class and didn't listen to others' voices as same as the other males in the patriarchal society of Japan. They wished to construct an order to put Japanese male in the center of Asia.

3) Start of Islamic Studies

In spite of the success and the development of sinology in Japan, Islamic studies was still kept untouched in academic circle. Several Asianist *ronins* such as Sakuma Teijiro 佐久間貞次郎 and Tanaka Ippei 田中逸平 converted to Islam in 1920s, in a hope that the cooperation between Japanese and Muslims in the continent could lead to the "liberation" of Asians under the control of western powers and Bolshevik. The making of Manchukuo also accelerated the need of the study of Islam because in Manchukuo there were more than 30 thousand of Muslim refugees from ex-Imperial Russian territory as well as Hui-Muslims [Sakuma 1938]. Mantetsu and Asianist *ronins* 浪人 started the primary research on Muslims and Islam. But it was not an officially subsidized project but privatized one supported by secret budget from Mantetsu.

4) Background of the Start of Islamic Studies in Japan

The full-scale study on Islam was initiated after the breakout of the Parco Polo Bridge Incident in July 1937. After a short period, Japanese Army occupied the whole North China and Inner Mongolia. Japanese encountered Muslims with an alleged population of 50 million-80 million and had to “control” them in spite of the annoyance of the different culture and religious belief.

Major Shigekawa 茂川, who was a specialist in making conspiracy in tactics, was appointed to the head of the Shigekawa Agency 茂川機関 to deal with Islamic affairs. This agency founded China Islamic League in February 1938 in the intention to organize all the Muslims under Japan’s military occupation and mobilize them to the anti-communist and pro-Japanese movements [Ando 2015] .

In Tokyo, Japanese Army, Navy and Ministry of Foreign Affairs affiliated and decided a national policy toward Islam in August 1938, figuring out the fundamental direction toward Islam and Muslims in China, Central Asia and Middle East [Shimada 島田 2015] In a paper entitled “Our Fundamental Policy toward Islam”, 「我回教政策樹立ノ基礎」, they pointed out the following direction, 1) utilizing the unification of power of Muslims, 2) utilizing Islam’s fundamental character of anti-atheist Bolshevism, 3) utilizing their anti-Christian and anti-Western sentiment, 4) utilizing Muslims’ ability and braveness, 5) utilizing the fact that Muslims as deprived people had the same interest as Japan, which also sought good market to Islamic area, 6) utilizing geopolitical importance of Islamic area (1) . Particularly as for Islam in China, the paper argued as follows, “Muslims have strong anti-communist and anti-western sentiment. Gradually they have become to have good feeling toward Japan... We have make them awake from the delusion of anti-Japanese China, which is supported by Russia and UK financially and militarily. If we do so, our policy toward the continent will become easier to accomplish and make East Asia more stable (under Japan’s rule). It would be in argent need to have an intimate relationship with Asian Muslims”. (2) .

In other words, Japan proposed to make Hui-Muslims as the tool of divide and policy to drive a wedge to anti-Japanese China, which consisted of Han. Concretely, Japan stipulated a policy to construct anti-communist zone in Northwest China to make Muslims divided from the Han ethnicity (3) . That was to say, it was a plan of the

formation of “Huihui-guo”, or a Muslim country under Japan’s dominance.

5) Development of Islamic scholarly work

Islamic area studies became a big boom in Japan after 1938, when the “security” was regarded to be restored in North China after the prompt retreat of the Guomindang troops.

In Zhangjiakou and Hohhot in Inner Mongolia or in Mengjiang Government, 蒙疆政府 Japan founded research institutes and they became centers to do field research on Muslims and Mongolians. In Baotou, they also opened Baotou Gongsuo (spy agency) [Komura 1988 : 95] , where they made a plan to construct an Asian Railway from Beijing to Istanbul. Kahoku Kotsu Co 華北交通, a Japan’s national-policy-based company, confiscated whole railways in North China and run not only transportation and security service but also was in charge of research and propaganda activities.

For the purpose, research project to investigate Muslims and Muslims in Northwest China became important to resolve the “China problem”, which meant how to cope with anti-Japanese sentiments and how to build a Japanese sphere of influence. They made a concrete construction plan of 8000 km railways across Central Asia from Baotou through Hami, Kucha, Kashgar, Pamir Highland, Afghanistan, Tehran, Baghdad, and Istanbul to Berlin and Paris. The planned railway, through which it would take only 10 days from Tokyo to Berlin, was named anti-Communist railway and Muslim railway for the development of mineral resources and transportation of Japanese goods. Muslims were regarded as “natural” buffers of communist penetration [Yumoto 湯本 1942: 10-15] .

Under these circumstances, many young researchers, mostly graduates of Japan’s Imperial Universities, in anthropology, history, linguistics, philosophy, philology and bionomics were totally mobilized and sent to this new Islamic research field with a full amount of grants. They perceived that “Islamic study in Japan is more backward than that of the West by a century or two” [Nohara 野原1965] and started the field research and publish a lot of papers and articles in a short period.

For example, young researchers who did field research on Islam in Inner Mongolia and North China played a role of engine to promote such research fields as Asian history, modern Chinese studies, ethnology, archeology and anthropology after the war.

We can recall the prominent names such as Iwamura Shinobu 岩村忍, Nohara Shiro 野原四郎, Takeuchi Yoshimi 竹内好, Ishida Eiichiro 石田英一郎, Niida Noboru 仁井田陞, Matsuda Hisao 松田寿男, Tasaka Kodo 田坂興道, Saguchi Toru 佐口透, Ono Shinobu 小野忍, Fujieda Akira 藤枝晃, Imanaga Seiji 今永清二 and Mitsunashi Fujio 三橋富治男.

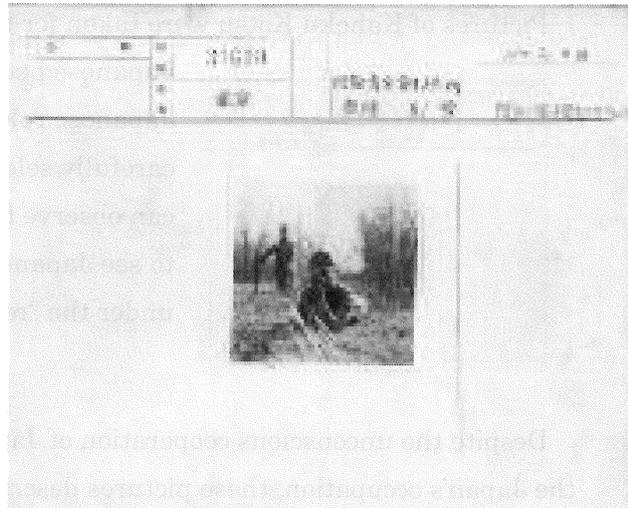
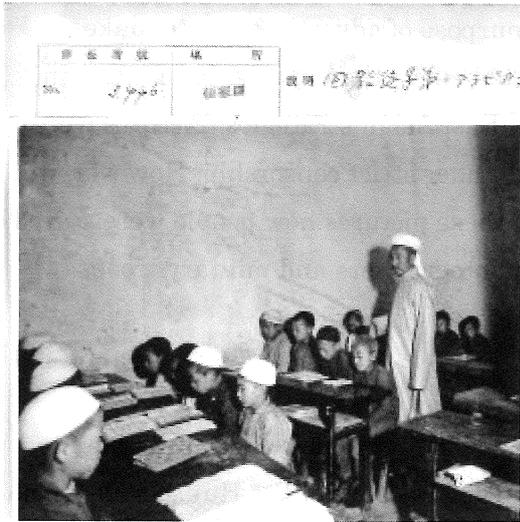
However, among the researchers above mentioned, we should point out many gave up Islamic studies after the war. We have to ponder the relationship between academic activities and the need of current affairs or the need of the continuation of military occupation. There was no independence of the study but the subordination to the national policy, which sometimes made mistakes.

Nohara Shiro 野原四郎, who gave up Islamic studies and restarted the study of Chinese Communist Party after the war, reflect himself in 1960s. He confessed that during the war Japanese scholars had not been able to criticize Japan's Islamic policy, which aimed at the divide and rule of the Chinese nation. Their attitude was, Nohara recalled, almost the same as ultra-nationalists, who only asserted Asian liberation as lip service but supported military oppression over Asian people [Nohara1965]. In other words, even Japanese researchers on the field were not able to put themselves on people's side. They didn't ponder their stance seriously but only cooperated with Japan's military policy without criticism, disregarding their own witness of Japanese military occupation which was inhuman and harsh to the local people. Such studies were, needless to say, not countable in any case.

2. Pictures on Muslims at the Kahoku Kotsu Photo Collection

In 2013, I and other scholars of Kyoto University started a project on the research of a photo collection kept at the Institute of Humanities 人文科学研究所, Kyoto University. The collection includes more than 36000 photos taken from 1938 until 1943 in North China and Inner Mongolia¹. The collection seemed to be donated by Kato Shinkichi 加藤新吉, the chief of Advertisement Bureau of Kahoku Kotsu, to Kyoto University after the war in the fear of the confiscation by GHQ. The photo collection has more than 200 photos of Muslims.

¹ This collection became an open resource on the internet and uploaded on February 12, 2019. <http://codh.rois.ac.jp/north-china-railway/>



They are various pictures such as prayer, mosques, Muslims' business such as camel rides and halal food stall, Muslim schools and Muslim youth organizations. The places of photo-taking spots were Inner Mongolia, including Zhangjiakou and Hohhot, Beijing, and Qinghua of Henan.

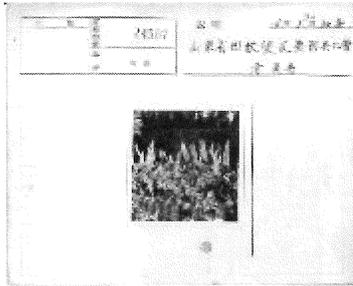
On the special issue on Islam of September 1942 of *Hokushi*, the caption told as follows,

Kahoku Kotsu's popular photo journal *Hokushi* (North China) also had special issues on Islam. The caption said as follows;

Nowadays, important parts of Islamic area have been put under the umbrella of our sphere of co-prosperity, we have to construct a solid community and inherit it to our offspring.... Knowing Muslims in Beijing is equivalent to knowing Muslims in Northwest. And this will leads to the road to know all the Muslims in the world. If we treat Muslims in China better, Muslims in the world will reassess Japanese and Japan.

Pictures were taken in the expectation to let Japanese audience know Muslims who seemed to be peculiar ones but potential friends for Japan. The truth was that Hui-Muslim collaborators were only the protectors of the Hui society in poverty and ignorance. For example, Tang Yicheng 唐易塵, one of responsible members of China Unified Muslim League, tried to keep food and necessary goods to make their Hui community safer. Despite Japan's discourse of "protector of Islam", Hui-Muslims in the occupied area of North China were scared of the foreign military dominance and wished to make them wiped out.

Pictures of Kahoku Kotsu were taken for the purpose of advertisement to make Japanese people to believe the importance of Islam in Japanese roles in East Asian strategies. Pictures were carefully selected under strict censorship. However, we can observe from these pictures how people were scared to see Japanese photographers and military troops under the “recovery of security”.



Despite the unconscious cooperation of Japanese photographers and researchers to the Japan’s occupation, these pictures describes some realities of the Hui-society, which has been lost since the destruction of 1958 and the Cultural Revolution. At the same time, we can suspect what would happen if military occupation by foreign powers took place against the local people’s will. At the same time, romanticized word of Silk Road used to be the tool of economic/ military dominance against the “others”.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued three points. One is the relationship between academic sinology and Japanese military policy. Second, researchers were mobilized to study Islamic affairs under Japan’s military dominance. They were unconscious of their collaboration with the Army and felt it was their responsibility to study “strange” but important people to Japan. Third, pictures for advertisement were taken for Japanese audience and they stimulated the intellectual curiosity of Japanese, who were also in the mode of Asian leaders.

Japan’s Islamic study became boom during the war and another Islamic area study project was conducted from 1999 until 2015. I was the one who were involved in the project. We have to recall the relationship between the two projects before and after the war. Without the reflection, we cannot escape from the romanticized Islamic consciousness and criticize Islamic fundamentalists’ brutal activities.

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